

**Board Chair:****Mr. Andrew Moses****Executive Director:**

Min. Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr.

Contact Information:

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Bishopville, SC 29010

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Total children in county under age 6: 1,552**Children under age 6 living in poverty: 24%**

Lee County Highlights

- Lee County provided 30 COE Scholarships, and 40 ERF Scholarships
- "I've already completed ECD 101"

Lee County

First Steps Partnership

Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

FY 2008 certainly proved to be both a rewarding and challenging year for Lee County First Steps (LCFS). The agency was fortunate to secure and implement two major grants--The Centers of Excellence (COE), a state funded 2-year pilot project and then a federally funded 3 year Early Reading First Grant. COE is based on 9 components to ensure that children receive high quality child care, and that child care professionals receive systematic training and professional development. This project afforded LCFS the opportunity to employee a full-time COE Coordinator- Ms. Sue Brathwaite.

In addition, LCFS received notice in September 2007 that the USDOE had awarded SC First Steps an Early Reading First Grant on behalf of Lee and Darlington Counties. This grant was a \$4.1 million award which has transformed and increased the quantity and quality of services that LCFS can provide. As a result, LCFS has been able to strengthen collaborations with the Lee County School District, Head Start, and private child care programs.

Lee County has continued to provide child care scholarships, parenting, and child care training for local child care providers. Local trainings have included collaborative conferences such as the Early Care, Education, and Rural Leadership Development Conference, and the Building Tools Conference- both collaborative efforts for First Steps Board of Directors development, and child care providers training.

With expanded services, LCFS has increased its local capacity, service and delivery in Lee County.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr.,
Executive Director
Lee County First Steps

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING.

Parents As Teachers

Program description: Increase the capacity of parents to be their child's best and most important teacher by expanding home visitation services.

The Parents As Teacher (PAT) program provides one, two, three or four home visits each month to families, based upon the identified needs of each family. The Born to Learn Curriculum is the official curriculum that the Parent Educators have been trained on and that they use during home visits. In addition, there are group meetings and activities scheduled for the parents and their

children. The program provides referrals to other community agencies, and provides developmental screenings and assessments of children enrolled in the program. During visits, the Parent Educators provide parents with information which addresses age-appropriate activities that the parent should be involved in with their child. They also provide the parents with handouts that address growth and development and things that they should be monitoring and observing as it relates to their child's growth and development. Parents are encouraged to become advocates for all of their children, especially if there are school-aged children in the house, by attending school functions and community events and activities.

Program results:

- 25 parents served
- 320 total home visits
- 54.7 % families received successful visits

QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Child Care Training and Professional Development

Program description: To ensure that child care providers of Lee County receive quality child care training at a reasonable cost.

Training addresses identified areas of interest and need that child care providers have noted as essential areas. Lee County First Steps has maintained an active and visible partnership with Darlington, Kershaw, Marlboro, and Williamsburg County First Steps to provide training via conferences to make certain that training is affordable. All of the trainings and trainers are certified by the Center for Child Care Career Development. During FY 2009 child care providers will be able to receive a minimum of 30 hours of trainings and special series trainings, such as "There's No Place Like Home". Lee County First Steps has forged a strong partnership with Central Carolina Technical College which opened a campus in downtown Bishopville in January 2006 to provide ECD-101, the introductory course needed by all child care providers. Several early child care professionals have been enrolled in the TEACH Program, and are working on academic credit at Central Carolina Technical College. These course offerings give providers the opportunity to receive multiple hours of DSS credit and college credit.

Program results:

- 171 staff trained
- 8 child care facilities participated in training
- 22 hours of child care training were provided for child care professionals in Lee County

Child Care Quality Enhancement Grants

Program description: To provide 6 Facility Quality Enhancement Grants to child care facilities in Lee County.

Child Care facilities have included family, group, public and private child care centers, Head Start and the Lee County School District. In addition, eligible participating child care facilities perform a self-assessment utilizing an appropriate approved rating scale

such as the ECERS-R, ITERS, and FDCRS. Eligible child care facilities submit grant proposals. Submission of grants is open to all childcare providers in Lee County who participate in the ABC Child Care Program.

Program results:

- LCFS coordinated Pre-Assessments on 3 sites (3 family child care, and 1 center)
- LCFS did not fully implement this strategy because of limited staff and implementation of COE and ERF Project which required expanded impact of County Partnership

Centers of Excellence

Program description: The First Steps Centers of Excellence Model is distinguished by the coordinated interplay of nine critical components:

For Children and Families:

- Targeted recruitment and need-based scholarships
- Nurturing care and research-based instruction
- Developmental screening and appropriate child assessment
- Parent education and involvement
- Health supports

For Providers:

- Quality enhancement (facility and materials)
- On-site mentoring and technical assistance
- Incentives to stable, qualified personnel, including scholarships to expand their learning
- Sustainable operation

Program results:

- 39 children received child care scholarships
- Children received home visits
- Families participated in parenting program
- Children received health assessments, health screenings, and developmental screenings and assessments
- Child care professionals received systematic training in PITC, Creative Curriculum, and LAP-3
- KIPS (Pre-Assessment: 1.68 Post-Assessment: 1.88)
- ACIRI Adult (Pre-Assessment: 1.08 Post-Assessment: 1.46)
- ACIRI Child (Pre-Assessment: 1.04 Post-Assessment: 1.15)
- Average Family Visits- 1 per month
- 214 Home Visits
- 39 Dental Screenings
- 39 Health Screenings
- 12 teachers completed at least one credit bearing course
- 9 referrals were made

EARLY EDUCATION

Early Reading First Summer Readiness Program

Program description: The Summer Readiness Program provided a comprehensive program that sought to strengthen the early literacy skills of children identified in the program as needing additional assistance.

Program results:

- 60 children were served
- The program was a 10 week comprehensive literacy based program based upon LEAP-Frog Theme Based Curriculum
- Children in the Summer Readiness program were assessed with Pre and Post LAP-3 Assessments
- The program was funded by the SC Early Reading Collaborative, an Early Reading First funded project
- Children were exposed to cultural literacy based experiences

S.C. Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)

Program description: CDEPP offers state-paid tuition of 4-year-old kindergarten classes to eligible students living in the 37 trial and plaintiff school districts involved in the school funding equity lawsuit, *Abbeville et al. vs. South Carolina*. First Steps oversees CDEPP 4K classes offered in non-public school environments. To qualify for state-paid tuition, a student's family must qualify for TANF or free/reduced-price lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2007, and live in an eligible school district.

Program results:

- 23 students served
- 2 of providers (Bishopville Lee Child Development Center and Lynchburg-Elliott Child Development Center) offering CDEPP 4K classes
- 3 classrooms served
- Teachers received professional development in Creative Curriculum and Work Sampling
- SC Office of First Steps provided Technical Assistance to all CDEPP classes

SCHOOL TRANSITION.

Countdown To Kindergarten Summer 2007

Program description: Ensure an educationally beneficial school transition by serving 70 at-risk children in the Countdown to Kindergarten program.

Program results:

- 70 children served Summer 2007 and 40 children served Summer 2008
- Children were provided with academic assistance in their homes

- Children participated in weekly culturally and academically enriching experiences.
- *90% of children received all 7 visits*
- *Targeted 92.5% of Free and Reduced Lunch*

Financial Summary

<u>Expenditures by Funding Source</u>			
State Appropriation.	\$117,834.27	State Private	\$0.00
E.I.A. Appropriation	\$46,159.29	Local Private	\$14,936.44
Lottery Appropriation	\$1,273.25	Federal	\$201,757.88
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation	\$88,076.90	In-Kind	\$0.00
C.O.E. Appropriation	\$149,241.74		

Grand Total \$ 619,279.77

<u>Expenditures by Program/Strategy Name</u>	
Early Education	\$89,157.67
Family Strengthening	\$90,250.11
Child Care	\$119,837.19
School Transition	\$63,831.85
Scholarships	\$150,609.20
Health	\$4615.77
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$57,649.31
Administrative Functions	\$43,328.67
GRAND TOTAL \$619,279.77	

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Central Carolina Community Foundation	\$5,000.00
Communities in Schools of Lee County	\$4,082.00
Lakeshore Learning Materials	\$1,000.00
New Zion AME Church	\$101.36
Pee Dee Electric Cooperative, Inc.	\$1,000.00
Reading is Fundamental Inc.	\$14,000.00
The Campbell Consulting Group	\$100.00
The State Newspaper	\$85.39
Unison Administrative Services	\$1,000.00
TOTAL:	\$26,368.75

Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 185.54%

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

LEE COUNTY FIRST STEPS BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Board Member's Name	Position on the Board
1. Mr. Andrew Moses	Legislative Appointee, Board Chair
2. Pat Saverance	Business Community
3. Lillie Patterson	Non-Profit Organization
4. Pastor Marcus Benjamin	Faith Community
5. Belinda Butler	Business
6. Betty D. Addison	Preschool through Primary
7. Jerlene Atkinson	Early Childhood Education
8. David "Keel" Addison	Parent of Preschool Child
9. M. Deloris LeGrant	Preschool through Primary
10. Rev. Archie S. Temoney, Sr.	Faith Community (Vice-Chair)
11. Hannah Hickman	Legislative Appointee
12. Bertha Scott	Early Childhood Education
13. Betty Rogers	Head Start
14. Melissa Robinson	DSS
15. Maverick Wilson	Legislative Appointees
16. Thelma Hannibal	Family Education, Training and Support
17. Nicole Simon	Parent of Preschool Child
18. Mattie Westry	Childcare and Early Childhood Development
19. Cheryl Sims	Family Education, Training, and Support (Secretary)
20. Sharon Teigue	Legislative Appointee
21. Socorro White	Early Childhood Education
22. Diana Williams	Early Childhood Education (Asst. Secretary)
23. Mary Lee Arthur	School District
24. Sandy Jenkins	Transportation
25. Sheila Moses	Health Provider
26. Valarie Haywood	Childcare and Early Childhood Development
27. Angela Tidwell	DHEC
28. Debbie Bartholomew	DSS
29. Eva Michelle Hannibal	Parent of Preschool Child
30. Elizabeth Snyder Powell	County Library
31. Rev. Herbert Fogle	Non-Profit (Vice Chair)
32. Bernard Simon	Transportation
33. Mary Mitchell	Health Care Provider

*Appointed and/or Served on the Board during a portion of FY2008

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY08, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

FY 2008 was an extremely exciting and unique year for Lee County First Steps because we were apart of a United States Department of Education Early Reading First Grant award, which SC First Steps submitted on our behalf in collaboration with Darlington County First Steps. The \$4.1 million award was made in September 2007, and Lee County First Steps, and the SC Office of First Steps had to develop the infrastructure to implement and execute this project, which would ultimately increase the services and programs for children and families, staff, and budget of Lee County First Steps. This partnership would present a unique opportunity for Lee County to provide services for early literacy for public school 4K, private child care three-year and four-year old children, and Head Start children. This grant was awarded in September 2007 with the expectation for full implementation by January 2008.

SUCCESS STORY

Gracie Dizzley,
Parent Educator

“Kiarra”

*This young mother strives to be the best mother to her child. She shares her concerns about her son and her future with her parent educator. If **Kiarra** did not receive a voucher for day care she would not have been able to attend and graduate from Sumter Lee Adult Education. Home Visits helped to motivate her and help her to set realistic goals.*

Last fiscal year, this young mom's main goal was to complete her course work so that she would receive her high school diploma. Although this young mom has completed her high school education, she is continuing her educational goals she established with her Parent Educator. She is enrolled in Central Carolina Technical College in Sumter, and working part-time.

COLLABORATION SUCCESS STORY

“SAMESHIA SPANN”

Submitted from Lillie Patterson, Bishopville Lee Child Development Center

Written by Sameshia Spann

At the age of 26, I found myself without a job and on welfare. It wasn't always like that for me. I had a job I thought until my hands started bothering me. I developed something called Carpel Tunnel Syndrome, so I quit my job of six years. About two months later I started receiving unemployment. That lasted for only a couple of months. I looked and looked for a job, but in these days and times you have to have a high school diploma or GED. I didn't have either. My last option was to get on welfare.

After a couple of months, my case manager- Mrs. Debbie Tindal put me in a work experience program at Bishopville-Lee Child Care Center. I started as a shadow in the 4-K class. I was nervous at first but I soon got the hang of things. Mrs. Lillie M. Patterson (Executive Director) treated me just like her regular staff. She always complimented on what a good job I was doing but since I didn't have a high school diploma she couldn't hire me. So Mrs. Patterson, Ms. Victoria McCray (Director), and Mrs. Tindal got together and came up with a plan so that I could get my diploma and still work.

I started attending Adult Education classes for a little while but then I stopped. Mrs. Patterson and Ms. McCray kept encouraging me to go back so finally I did. I guess I had to get in the right mind set to get back on track, and when I started back there was no stopping me. I went day and night. I would come home from school and my son and I would sit at the table together and study. The more I studied the more he studied, and soon his grades went from C's and D's to A's and B's. I think seeing him bring his grades up encouraged me more.

Mrs. Patterson and Ms. McCray kept up on my progress motivated me, and after about four months I had my high school diploma. I was so proud of myself, and I didn't know what to do, I actually cried. Being out of school for so long I never thought I would have accomplished so much. After receiving my diploma, I started my career track in Early Childhood. I am currently enrolled at Central Carolina. I've already completed ECD 01, Math 031. I currently have a GPA of 4.0, and I hope to maintain. My mother was so overwhelmed with my achievement that she went back to school.

I owe all of my thanks to God because without him none of this would have been possible, Mrs. Patterson, Mrs. Patterson, M. McCray, Ms. Tindal and my family who were behind me 100%. To all of those people who think it's too late, it's never too late. Keep your head up and don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't do something because you can. Be strong and stay focused!

SCHOOL READINESS STRATEGIES FOR 2008-2009

The Lee County Partnership will offer 1-3 quality enhancement grants.

Child Care Training and Professional Development will ensure that child care professionals complete ECD 101, School Age Child Care, There's No Place Like Home, and Creative Curriculum, PITC, Mandatory Reporting, E-LAP and LAP-III, Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect (PCAN), and other academic and/or Center for Child Care Career Development trainings in order to strengthen Early Care in Lee County.

Lee County First Steps will host a minimum of two Lee County Child Care Directors' Forum to discuss issues impacting them, and to ensure that training needs are been adequately addressed.

LCFS will continue to implement the Family As Readers Programs Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) Program which includes a lending library and book distribution program for children in child care, public and private schools in Lee County (birth to 3rd grade) .

LCFS will continue collaboration with the Lee County School District, Wateree Head Start, and private care providers to establish a county-wide perspective for the Pilot 4K Program to ensure that all entities are collaborating to ensure that every eligible four-year-old child in the county is served.

LCFS will continue comprehensive services to Bishopville Lee Child Development Center and Lynchburg Elliott Child Development Center with the implementation of the Centers of Excellence (COE) Model.

LCFS will continue to be a partner with Lee County School District's Even Start Family Literacy Programs.

LCFS has partnered with Lee County School District to participate in the Save The Children's Early Steps' 2 year-pilot project by providing funding to support the Early Childhood Educator.

LCFS and Darlington County First Steps Partnership in collaboration with the South Carolina Office of First Steps will continue implementation of the South Carolina Early Reading Collaborative , which is an Early Reading First Grant funded by the US Department of Education, to provide comprehensive services to three and four year-old children enrolled in the following project sites in Lee County: West Lee Elementary School, Wateree Head Start (Bishopville Site), Bishopville-Lee Child Development Center, Lynchburg-Elliott Child Development Center. In Lee County this grant will support: child care scholarships, training, professional development, quality enhancement, Countdown To Kindergarten, Dolly Parton Imagination Library, 10 Week Summer Enrichment Program, Transition To Kindergarten activities, and the following staff: Family Coaches, Early Literacy Coaches, and Early Interventionist.









2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Lee County

Total Children Under Six: 1,552

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

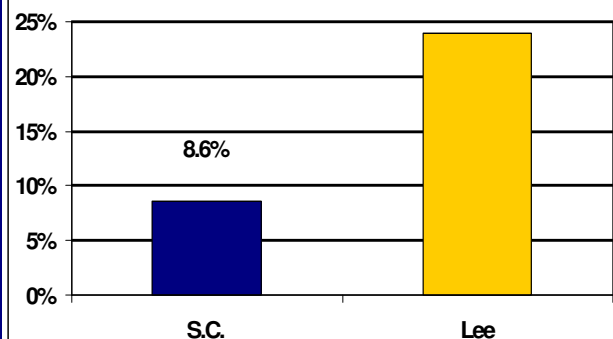
Lee County (2007): 24.0%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 4 Lee County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

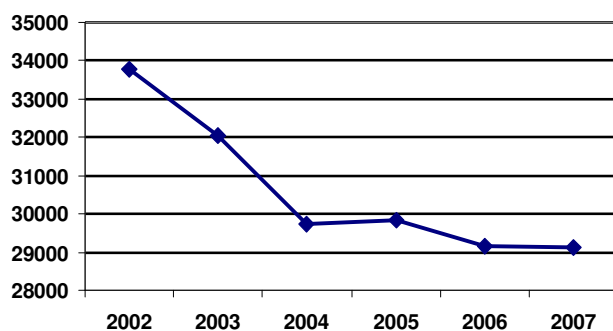
Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.

373 of Lee County’s 1,552 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.

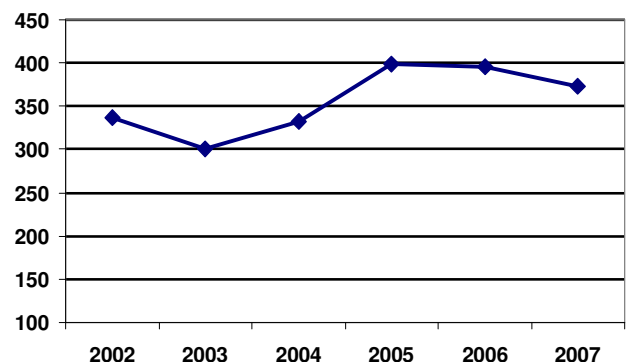
Children Under Age 6 Receiving TANF Benefits
(August 2007)



South Carolina Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



Lee County Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Lee County

Total Children Under Six: 1,552

CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

Lee County (2005): 10.2%

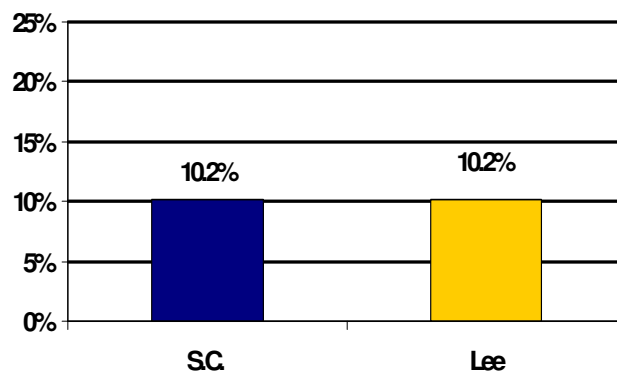
Fast Fact: 1 in 10 Lee County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.

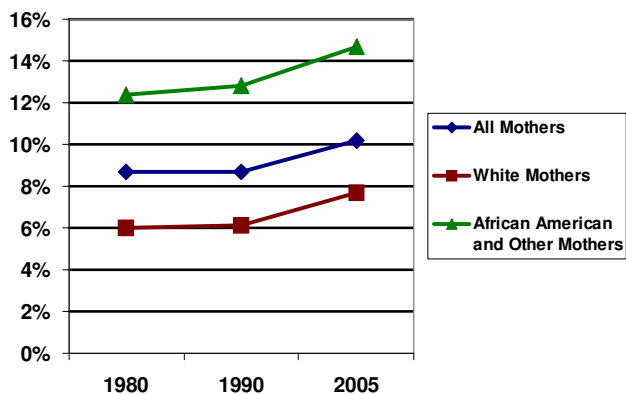
Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.

25 of the 244 children born in Lee County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.

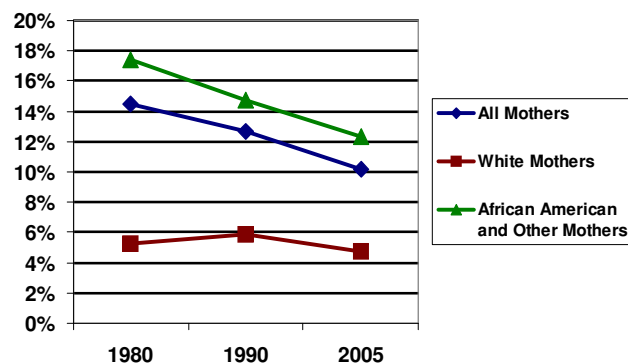
Births at Less Than 5.5 lbs. (2005)



South Carolina Births at Less than 5.5 lbs.



Lee County Births at Less than 5.5 lbs.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Lee County

Total Children Under Six: 1,552

BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

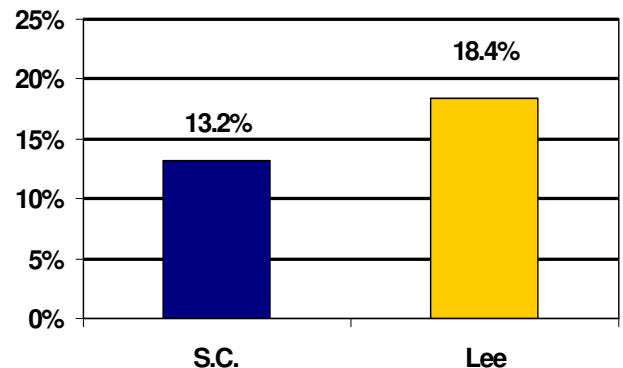
Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Lee County (2005): 18.4%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 5 Lee County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

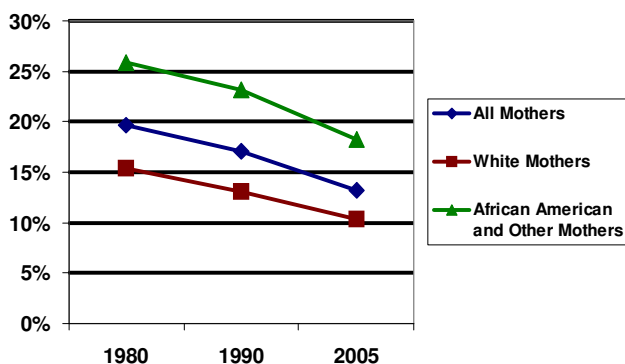
Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.

45 of the 244 children born in Lee County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

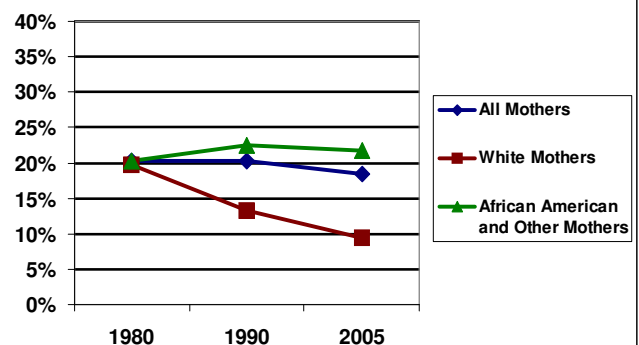
Births to Teenage Mothers (2005)



South Carolina Births to Teenage Mothers



Lee County Births to Teenage Mothers



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Lee County

Total Children Under Six: 1,552

BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

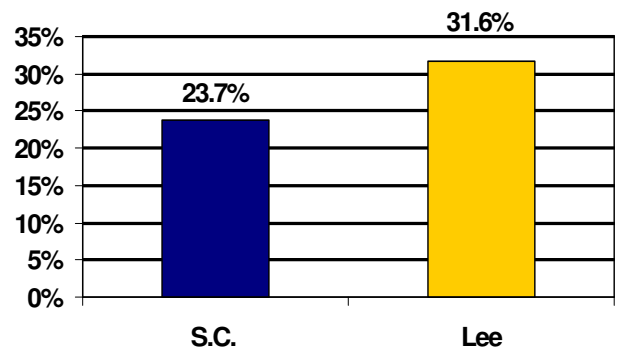
Lee County (2005): 31.6%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 3 children in Lee County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

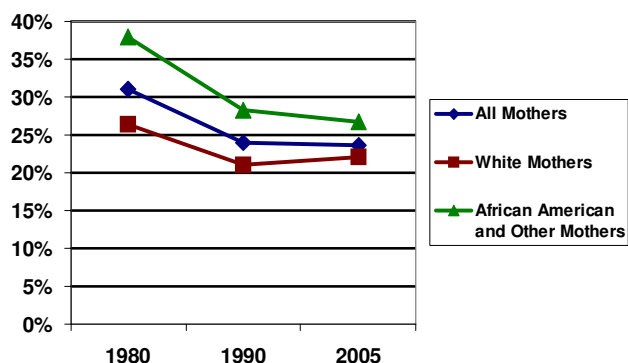
Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

77 of the 244 children born in Lee County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.

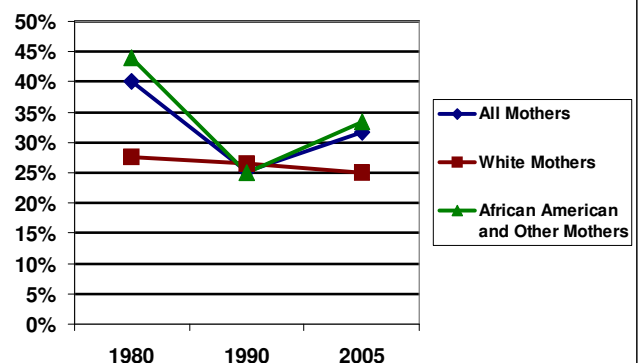
Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma (2005)



SC Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



Lee County Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



SUCCESS STORY

Gracie Dizzley,
Parent Educator

“Kiarra”

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LCFS will continue to implement the Family As Readers Programs Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) Program which includes a lending library and book distribution program for children in child care, public and private schools in Lee County (birth to 3rd grade) .

LCFS will continue collaboration with the Lee County School District, Wateree Head Start, and private care providers to establish a county-wide perspective for the Pilot 4K Program to ensure that all entities are collaborating to ensure that every eligible four-year-old child in the county is served.

LCFS will continue comprehensive services to Bishopville Lee Child Development Center and Lynchburg Elliott Child Development Center with the implementation of the Centers of Excellence (COE) Model.

LCFS will continue to be a partner with Lee County School District's Even Start Family Literacy Programs.

LCFS has partnered with Lee County School District to participate in the Save The Children's Early Steps' 2 year-pilot project by providing funding to support the Early Childhood Educator.

LCFS and Darlington County First Steps Partnership in collaboration with the South Carolina Office of First Steps will continue implementation of the South Carolina Early Reading Collaborative , which is an Early Reading First Grant funded by the US Department of Education, to provide comprehensive services to three and four year-old children enrolled in the following project sites in Lee County: West Lee Elementary School, Wateree Head Start (Bishopville Site), Bishopville-Lee Child Development Center, Lynchburg-Elliott Child Development Center. In Lee County this grant will support: child care scholarships, training, professional development, quality enhancement, Countdown To Kindergarten, Dolly Parton Imagination Library, 10 Week Summer Enrichment Program, Transition To Kindergarten activities, and the following staff: Family Coaches, Early Literacy Coaches, and Early Interventionist.







